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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

Preſent Scarcity and High Price

OF

COALS IN SCOTLAND;

AND ON

THE MEANS OF PROCURING GREATER QUANTITIES AT A CHEAPER RATE.

WITH AN

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE LAWS RELATIVE TO *SALT*;

ON THOSE IMPOSING A DUTY ON COAL CARRIED COASTWISE;

AND ON THE LAWS RELATING TO

THE DISTILLERY IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. Johnson

EDINBURGH:

1793.

BRITISH MUSEUM

HAVING had permiſſion from Mr TAYLOR of Edinburgh, one of the principal owners of Ayr Colliery, to cauſe reprint the following *valuable* Publication, on the Cauſes of the late *Scarcity* and High Price of Coal in Scotland, I beg leave to recommend it to the peruſal of thoſe who may wiſh to be informed on matters of *ſuch importance* to the Inhabitants of this country.

THE EDITOR.

SINCE the firſt Edition of this Pamphlet was advertiſed for ſale, Mr DUNDAS has given notice of his intention to bring in a bill for the purpoſe of taking off the coaſting duty on coals, in the northern part of the kingdom. If he ſhall ſucceed in relieving Scotland from ſo odious and oppreſſive a tax, he will do *more real ſervice to this country than all the Miniſters that ever preceded him.* Such a meaſure cannot injure the revenue; for the *increaſe* of revenue which will ariſe from the *increaſed proſperity of the country*, in conſequence of its being relieved from ſo partial a tax, will *add tenfold* to the amount of revenue in other articles. Theſe are the meaſures that point out the true patriot, the *real friend of the people:* It is not by timidly yielding to the clamours

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of *ſpeculative reformers*, that the talents of a Miniſter are known; but by acutely diſcerning, and *boldly purſuing*, *thoſe plans by which the poor are relieved, and the country improved.*

CON-

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE PRESENT

Scarcity and Dearneſs of Coals

IN

SCOTLAND, &c.

COALS are among thoſe neceſſaries of life in this climate, *ſo eſſential* to all ranks, ſo much connected with their comfort, and with the *general proſperity* of Scotland, that the *preſent ſcarcity*, and the conſequent dearneſs of the article, have become as diſtreſſing at the inſtant, as *the proſpect of their continuance is alarming*.

In Edinburgh, we uſed to be ſerved with great coal, brought to our door, at *Five Shillings*, or *Five Shillings* and *Sixpence*; laſt year they roſe to *Six Shillings*, for a

cart of twelve hundred weight. They are now at *Ten* or *Twelve* Shillings, and often not to be had at that price. An increaſe of *double price* on an article ſo eſſential to our very exiſtence at this time is truly diſtreſſing. It is particularly ſo to the labourers and poorer claſſes of citizens, happening at the very time when their wages are low, and many out of employment.

Was there any real ground to ſuppoſe that the mines of coal in this country would be exhauſted ſoon, it would be a ſerious calamity indeed. Take away coal, and this country, *deſtitute as it is now of wood, is uninhabitable.* It will be ſome conſolation if I am able to ſatisfy the public, that the preſent ſcarcity does not ariſe from any failure in the mines themſelves, or any apprehenſion of a poſſibility of thoſe mines being exhauſted for many centuries to come, and that the evil proceeds from cauſes which admit of a remedy. My intention here is to ſuggeſt what occurs to me on the cauſes

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of this ſcarcity at preſent, and the means of removing it. If I ſhall be fortunate to ſuggeſt any uſeful hint which can be improved on, my end is gained.

In conſidering the ſituation of Edinburgh, and the facility of ſupplying it with coal, one ſhould think no place in the iſland of Britain ſo happily ſituated in this reſpect. To the South and Eaſt of Edinburgh, and approaching within three miles of it, there is a field of about fifteen miles from Eaſt to Weſt, and nine miles from North to South, almoſt one continued field of coal; conſiſting of a variety of workable ſeams, ſome three, four, five, and even nine feet thick, already diſcovered, and what more ſeams may lye to the dip of theſe muſt be left for poſterity ſome centuries hence to explore; for, certainly, what have been already diſcovered cannot be exhauſted for many ages to come *.

It

* At the colliery of Gilmerton, within three miles of

It is true, that many of the ſeams the moſt acceſſible, at thoſe places where they can be wrought to moſt advantage, have been much waſted, and that in the progreſs of ſuch workings more water has been collected, which it is neceſſary to draw, that pits muſt be ſunk in ſome places deeper than formerly, and that additional powers to draw the water muſt be applied; that as the coal neareſt Edinburgh is waſted, it will be neceſſary to go a little farther diſtant. But ſtill, though theſe circumſtances might occaſion a ſmall riſe in the price, they cannot account for the preſent high price and *ſcarcity*. Far leſs is there the leaſt reaſon to apprehend that the immenſe field in the extent before deſcribed is exhauſted, or in danger of being ſo for ages to come.

Neither is there any reaſon to think that the circumſtances before mentioned, or any addition

of Edinburgh, there are 14 ſeams of coal within 40 fathoms of the ſurface, all of ſufficient thickneſs to be workable,

addition that theſe could make to the expence of working coal, would make it neceſſary to add much to their price. The knowledge which is now acquired in making ſteam engines at a ſmaller expence, and of drawing the coal with theſe at any depth in place of horſes, joined to the general knowledge of mechanics, compenſates the coal-maſter for the difficulties which ariſe from an increaſe of water, or the greater depth he has to draw the coal. In general, the deeper the pit, the better the quality of the coal, and the leſs water to draw, becauſe the feeders from the ſurface muſt be the leſs: If we go a certain depth under the level of the ſea, it is ſeldom much water is met with, unleſs there is ſome extraordinary ſhake in the metals or cutters, to conduct it. With the improvements that may yet be expected in ſteam engines and mechanics, who knows but, in the progreſs of time, it may be as eaſy to work coal at 150 fathoms, as we now do at 50 fathoms deep; or who can tell what ſeams may lye below theſe

now

now diſcovered? But without truſting to theſe diſcoveries, it is a comfortable reflection, that thoſe already known, are in a manner inexhauſtible.

It may be aſked, If there is ſuch a quantity of coal near Edinburgh, whence comes the preſent ſcarcity? I ſhall endeavour to account for this hereafter: Let it ſuffice here to obſerve, that this ſcarcity is not confined to Edinburgh and its vicinity; the ſame diſtreſs attends every part of Scotland. It is not becauſe there is not plenty of coal in the bowels of the earth, but becauſe a ſufficient quantity *is not taken out* to ſerve the general conſumption.

But if there was no coal to be had in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh by land-carriage, no place can be ſo well ſituated to be ſupplied by water-carriage. From the bay of St Andrews, all along the Eaſt coaſt of Fife, and up the Firth of Forth, near to Stirling, for a tract of 50 miles, there is almoſt one

one continued field of coal. In all this tract we cannot go three miles, but we meet with going coal works, at a medium within three or four miles of a harbour. On the oppoſite ſide of the Firth, there are alſo many very extenſive coal works. Within the bounds I have now deſcribed, and within three or four miles of a harbour or ſhipping place, there are actually about 30 going coal works from which coals are ſhipped.

The Firth of Forth affords an eaſy and cheap navigation to Leith, without being ſubjected to the expence of *lockage*, or *tonage duty*, or to interruption from want of water, or from ice. If it was neceſſary to open up a farther communication by water into a coal country, the Great Canal between the Forth and Clyde, has already done ſo: From the mouth of this canal at Grangemouth, for 30 miles on both ſides of it, beginning with Kinnaird colliery, there is almoſt a continued field of coal.

Thus

Thus ſituated, with an extenſive field of coal at hand, with the fineſt navigation in the world, in the heart of a country abounding with coal, and with coal works every where eſtabliſhed, one ſhould think Edinburgh particularly well ſituated for being ſupplied with this article in plenty, and at a rate as cheap as any part of Scotland.

This was accordingly the caſe, till within theſe twelve months. The coals at the coal works in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh on the Firth of Forth, are known under the three qualities of great coal, chews (that is the ſmaller pieces) and pawnwood or culm, which is the ſmalleſt, or the refuſe, made in working. The great coal, was ſold at the pits, and within three miles of Edinburgh, at a medium of 6 s. the 24 hundred weight. At one coal hill, where the quality was reckoned ſuperior, the price was 7 s. but at others 5 s. and 6 d. The medium may be ſtated at 6 s. But as the chews ſold for about two thirds of this price, and

and the panwood, or culm, at the half of the price of chews, taking one quality with another, the price of 24 hundred weight of coal at theſe pits contiguous to the town of Edinburgh was about 4s. this was alſo nearly the price at all the collieries on the Firth.

This price was not only *low*, but the difficulty of ſales, and the time the coal lay on the hill, waſting before the ſales could be effected, ſtill contributed as a diſcouragement to the coal-maſter. The great coal, from the works which produced coal of the beſt quality, found a pretty ready ſale at all times; but the ſale of chews and pan coal, went very heavily: Great quantities of them were always on hand; every one of us muſt remember to have ſeen great ſtacks of coal at every coal hill, particularly in ſummer, for which no ſales could be got.

When ſuch was the ſituation of the trade, and ſuch the difficulty of *ſelling*, within

theſe two years, not at one place in Scotland, but over the whole country where collieries were carried on, one is at firſt ſtruck with ſome ſurpriſe, that now, in little more than a year, our ſituation ſhould be ſo very different: That, not at one particular place, but over all Scotland, there ſhould at once ariſe ſuch a difficulty of finding coals to *buy:* The price in many places is nearly doubled in two years, in others increaſed a third or a fourth; A ſhip has now to lye at the ſhipping places ten or twelve weeks before it comes to her turn to be loaded; and if we ſend a horſe and cart to the coalhills in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, they may remain there three or four days before it come to their turn to be loaded! If coals were like crops of grain, of an annual production or growth, the cauſe might be found in the bad ſeaſons: But as they are not ſubject to viciſſitudes of this nature, and no general calamity has diſſolved them by earthquakes, fires, or volcanos

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in the bowels of the earth, we muſt look for the cauſe of this decreaſe in the quantity raiſed; not in the elements; not in the decay of them in the mines themſelves; not from any cauſe in nature, but in *the defect of means for raiſing them from the mine in ſufficient quantities.*

I have heard of many ſchemes, ſome for trying for coals in the neighbourhood, and to the weſt of Edinburgh; others for making a canal from Edinburgh to join the Monkland canal, which it is ſaid will open a communication to fields of an immenſe extent. To complete ſuch a canal, even on a ſmall ſcale, it is ſaid, it would coſt about 200,000l. and from the height it is neceſſary to carry it, would require about 100 locks. *Where is the water* to be found to ſupply ſuch a waſte? And *how* is the money to be raiſed to make it? When all theſe difficulties are overcome, *cui bono* as to the inhabitants of Edinburgh?

I am aware that ſuch a canal would be a great addition to the value of the gentlemen's eſtates lying along or near the tract. I will even admit that coal, iron ſtone, &c. at the diſtance of 20 miles might be brought along this canal to Edinburgh; though, *without knowing* the preciſe number of locks to paſs, or the lockage and tonage duty to be paid, one cannot form a conjecture whether coals by ſuch a canal would be delivered cheaper in Edinburgh, than coal could be raiſed and delivered from the *preſent coal-works within three or four miles of the town.*

Suppoſe the gentlemen to the weſt of Edinburgh were ſucceſsful, and found coal in the courſe of their preſent reſearches; and let it be even ſuppoſed that it is found within five or ſix miles of Edinburgh, it might be ſerviceable to the country immediately about the pit, making the carriage to them ſo much eaſier. But what would it avail us in Edinburgh, or how do we ſuppoſe that a pit within four or five miles *to*

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the weſt of Edinburgh is to increaſe the quantity any more than ſeams of coal at pits at the *ſame diſtance* to the eaſt and ſouth of Edinburgh? or how do we reaſon juſtly in ſuppoſing a *new* canal to Glaſgow is to anſwer the purpoſe of ſupplying Edinburgh with coal much cheaper and in greater quantities than the canal which *nature has formed by the Firth of Forth*, or which art has *already* formed through countries abounding with coal?

Suppoſe, as already mentioned, we find coal to the weſt of Edinburgh, there muſt be *colliers found* to work it. And as there are *no ſpare* colliers, theſe muſt be *drawn from* other coal works. What then will it avail us in Edinburgh to *diminiſh* the quantity of the out-put of coals at the works *on the Firth of Forth*, or at the pits to the eaſt and ſouth of Edinburgh, in order to put them out as far *to the weſt* of Edinburgh. *If* you can find colliers at preſent unemployed, or if you can *add* by any means

means to the number, will it not ſerve our purpoſe as effectually to put them into the *old pits*, now working to the eaſt and ſouth of Edinburgh, as to put them into *new pits* to the weſt?

At this very time, I am aſſured that all the proprietors of coals near Edinburgh are *in want* of hands to work their coal; and that double, treble the preſent quantity might be produced, if more colliers could be procured, or thoſe now employed *be prevailed on to work*; and that many of theſe proprietors are actually *loſing money in ſtruggling againſt theſe difficulties*.

If a canal is formed from Edinburgh to join the Monkland canal, no doubt it will go through an inland country full of coal mines, iron-ſtone, and lime-ſtone. In the propoſed tract, and in the middle of this inland country, there is already eſtabliſhed an iron work on a large ſcale; if this canal was opened, we ſhould *ſoon have many more*.

I will not diſpute that the making and manufacturing of iron is a ſource of national wealth; and that ſuch a canal, as ſerving to encourage and extend that trade, would be a work of public utility, and particularly advantageous to the contiguous proprietors. But I am rather at a loſs to *conceive*, how the giving facility to the eſtabliſhment and extenſion of ſuch manufactures, how the *withdrawing the colliers from the coal-works near Edinburgh, to put them into pits for the ſupply of ſuch iron-works, can tend to make coal cheaper in Edinburgh.* At this moment, I underſtand, there are none of the collieries contiguous to Edinburgh but are in *diſtreſs for want of hands.* That they can give work to double the number more than are in their works at preſent; *their profits are in the ratio of the out-put*, and the charges of the carter in carrying are in ſome way dependent on their *diſpatch* of being loaded at the hill; or, in other words, on the out-put: So that, were the numbers of colliers *increaſed* in the pits near Edinburgh,

burgh, the coalmaſter would have *more profit*, the carters be *better paid*, and ſtill the conſumers receive their coal *much cheaper*.

I may ſtill go a ſtep farther, and maintain, that the opening of a new coal in the vicinity of Edinburgh would *not tend* to reduce the price or increaſe the quantity ſo effectually, as extending the out-put, and multiplying the colliers in ſome of the *old eſtabliſhed collieries*. There are always *certain expences*, called on-coſt, attending every colliery, which is much the ſame, *whatever is the out-put*. For inſtance, take the caſe of Lord Abercorn's works, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, on which there are two engines, one of them of great power. Whether you raiſe 10 or 20,000 tons, the expences of theſe engines are the ſame; the pay of the manager, overſmen, wrights, ſmiths; the making roads below ground, ſinking pits, and an infinite number of other things, muſt go on at ſame expence, whatever is the out-put of the colliery. Without having

having any opportunity of knowing with preciſion, I will venture to ſay, that the general on-coſt of this work is not leſs than 2000 l. which muſt be paid for by the year, be the out-put ever ſo ſmall; and this independent of the expence of hewing, raiſing, and drawing the coal, and other articles of expence, which are paid on the quantity. Now, ſuppoſe the out-put at theſe works is 20,000 ton annually, this, at 6 s. *per* ton, would produce 6000 l. *per annum;* of which ſetting aſide for the general on-coſt 2000 l. there remains 4000 l. to pay for the working and raiſing the coal: But, if we reduce the out put to 10,000, this would leave only 1500 l. to pay the expence of raiſing it; the work muſt then ſtop. If, on the other hand, *colliers can be found to raiſe* 40,000 *tons, they could be ſold with more profit to the proprietor at* 4 *s. than* 10,000 *can be ſold at* 6 *s. the ton. Is it* then the intereſt of the citizens of Edinburgh, *to increaſe the difficulties* on the old works? *to hold out inducements* to the colliers to *de-*

ſert them? to ſhut up the coal-works *adjacent* to the town, and hold out bounties to thoſe *at a diſtance.* Even if this was wiſe policy, the remedy is uncertain and *diſtant:* No coal has yet been found to the weſt of Edinburgh, within ſuch a reaſonable diſtance as to admit of being brought to Edinburgh by land carriage; the neareſt coal yet diſcovered to the weſt is about 20 miles diſtant, and to form a canal for water carriage is *the work of years.* To *depend upon relief* to the *preſent grievance* from this quarter is too precarious, too uncertain, and *too diſtant.* We muſt look for it nearer at hand, or the remedy will come *too late* for the preſent generation.

In looking for a remedy, it is always beſt to begin with the *ſource* and *cauſe* of the evil; it is one ſtep towards removing a malady, to trace the origin and cauſe of it. I have endeavoured to ſhow alſo, that the cauſe *does not* lye where it is commonly ſuppoſed, in the mines being exhauſted, or from

from any apprehenſion of this happening for many years to come. I have endeavoured to ſhew, that the opening *new* coal-works, or *new* fields of coal, and making theſe acceſſible to Edinburgh, though it might be an advantage to the proprietors in the vicinity of theſe works, though it might *diſtreſs* the *old eſtabliſhed* coal-works, by *withdrawing* or *reducing* the number of their hands, and of courſe their out-put of coals, would, on the whole, bring *no more* to the market than at preſent.

The reaſon of the preſent ſcarcity I attribute to the following cauſes:

1. The *low price* of coal at the pits, and the difficulty of effecting ſales *to any extent*, till within theſe two years, operated as a diſcouragement to the gradual extenſion of many of the old works to the ſcale of which they were capable, and prevented many proprietors from opening more pits and more coal-works. The ſame cauſes prevented

vented proper attention being paid to the training more colliers, or keeping up the numbers. The demand for coal has been by no means progreſſive and gradual. It has come all of a ſudden, in the ſpace of a year, or little more. In this period the demand is immenſely increaſed, while *no preparation was made any where* to meet this ſudden increaſe of demand. To drive levels, to ſink pits, and to open new fields of coal, to procure and train up colliers, is not the work of a day; it requires much time, labour, and expence.

2. It is very difficult to account for this rapid and ſudden increaſe of the demand, which, to all appearance, ſeems doubled, in the courſe of two years, all over Scotland. But the more obvious cauſes ſeem to ariſe from the recent increaſe of *iron-works*, of *founderies*, of *glaſshouſes*, and other manufactories. The iron-works and founderies of Carron and Clyde alone conſume as many coals as all the inhabitants of Edinburgh.

2*dly*,

2*dly*, The general proſperity of the country, and the facility of procuring money *on credit*, has promoted an uncommon ſpirit of enterpriſe of late, and multiplied and extended manufactures of all kinds, in ſome of which a great deal of coal is conſumed.

3. The luxury of the rich has multiplied fires in their families, and the high wages of the tradeſmen and labourers, enable them now to burn a great deal more coal than formerly. The wages of tradeſmen, in a very ſhort time, have had an addition of one third, ſome one half; their conſumption of coal may have increaſed in ſame proportion. To all theſe we may probably add an increaſe of population, as well as a general influx of wealth.

But theſe cauſes are ſcarce ſufficient to account for this ſudden ſcarcity and apparent increaſe in the conſumption of coal. If there were no other cauſes, one would ſuppoſe the remedy would gradually ariſe from the

the ſame ſource, and that the commodity would ſoon come to a level with the demand.

I am however apprehenſive, that the evil ariſes principally from other cauſes; and that it is *increaſing*, and will continue *to increaſe, until ſome adequate remedy is applied.*

4. I apprehend the evil ariſes, *firſt*, from there being *too few colliers* in Scotland to work the coal equal to the demand; and, 2*dly*, That from the ſame cauſe the colliers we have *do not work* two thirds of the quantity they could put out by *regular* and *ſteady* work.

Perſons unacquainted with the trade, and peculiar diſpoſitions of the colliers in Scotland, would naturally ſay, Give better wages, and you will get more hands; people will become colliers in place of going to other trades, if they make more money as colliers.

colliers. But thoſe who reaſon ſo take but a ſuperficial view of the buſineſs.

The old law of Scotland, which placed colliers in a ſtate of ſlavery, which attached them and their children to the occupation, to the ſoil, and to the ſpot where they were born, had placed them in a ſtate of degradation; they were looked upon with pity and contempt by other ranks. The diſreſpect which ſecluded them from other ſocieties, had the natural effect of making them ſavage and brutal in their manners. Deſtitute of all principles of religion and morality; perfectly indifferent to the opinion of the world, they had no motives of emulation to incite their induſtry. Hence they lived in *dirty* hovels, a few looſe boards and ſtraw formed their beds, a pot and pan, with round ſtones, or timber ſtools, to ſit on, the whole furniture of the houſe.

The manner of treating their wives and daughters, of making them bearers in the pits,

pits, of employing them to carry coal on their backs; of *mixing the ſexes in the pits*, did not contribute to cultivate or humaniſe their manners.

It is no wonder then, that while this continued to be the cuſtom, the numbers of colliers could derive no increaſe from other claſſes; their numbers muſt have been kept up by themſelves; they could find no ſupply from other quarters.

But though this law was, about twenty years ago, in ſome degree repealed, ſtill the prejudices to this employment are not removed; we ſtill ſee too much ſimilarity in the manners, the principles, and the conduct, of the preſent race of colliers in Scotland, to what might have been expected from the old law under which they were born. At many collieries they ſtill conſider themſelves as a diſtinct race, in ſome meaſure at war with other ranks of ſociety, with whom they have little intercourſe.

With

With little or no education, they ſtill retain *the ſame ſavage* and brutal manners, *the ſame dirtineſs* in their houſes and in their clothes, and the ſame contempt for the opinion of other ranks. Hence having never known better, they only work till the labour of *three days* ſhall enable them the other four *to remain idle*, to indulge in their *favourite liquor of Whiſky*, and to keep themſelves in a ſtate of riot and inebriation.

They have among them too a practice which makes any reformation of their manners very difficult. They have among them what they call *brotherings:* It is a ſolemn oath, or engagement, to ſtand by each other. In the weſt country, where this practice is univerſal, they have ſome *watch-word*, by ſending round of which they can lay *the whole collieries in the country idle.*

If a collier from England, or from any other place, who is not of the brotherhood, comes among them, he is immediately

obliged to enter into the ſociety, and take this oath, or they will not allow him to work. The caſe is, that they are generally united, and if the majority in the pit agree to make an *idle* day, the *reſt muſt do the ſame*. If they offer to work, they are ſeverely fined, or obliged to leave the work. By this means, a pit ſeldom works above *three days* in the week. In theſe three days a man, and his wife as bearer, will make about 16 s. or 17 s.; this is ſufficient for all their wants, to live in a hovel, to lye on ſtraw, and *to buy ſpirits* to keep them in a ſtate of intoxication. Knowing no better, a collier has no incitements. *He is a ſtranger to the comforts of domeſtic life.*

Thus circumſtanced, having *no local attachments*, not being much incumbered *by baggage*, a collier in Scotland, his wife, and family, move from place to place as eaſily as a *Tartar*. He carries his all on his back; and whenever he is in the leaſt diſſatisfied, or is ſeized with a wandering

dering fit, off he ſets, *diſregarding all engagements*, and travelling over the country from coal-work to coal-work; *borrows*, *contracts debt*, and *levies* money, by entering into engagements at *every* work, which he *violates without the leaſt ſcruple or remorſe*.

In England, a collier can ſeldom earn above 1 s. 6 d. a day, his wages are about the half of what the colliers in Scotland make; yet an Engliſh collier has a neat well furniſhed houſe; he has good diet; is well dreſſed; he has good clothes; his houſe carries the appearance of comfort and conveniency; *becauſe* he labours the whole *ſix* days, *becauſe he drinks no Whiſky*. The conſequence is what may be eaſily conceived: At many coal-works at Newcaſtle the coals are hewed at 4 d. *per* tun; in Scotland they generally coſt above *four times* this ſum; colliers are eaſily procured at Newcaſtle, and near double the quantity of coal is raiſed, in a circle of twelve miles diameter,

ter, that are raiſed in all Scotland. They carry coals by waggons eight or nine miles, ſhip them in lighters, ſend them to Shields or Sunderland in theſe lighters; and, after all, they put them on board as *cheap* as thoſe in the Firth of Forth are put on board at preſent.

In the circle now deſcribed they can raiſe double the quantity they now do. In order to keep up the price, the coal-maſters are in an *alliance* for regulating the out-put at every work; and ſuch is the contraſt of their ſituation at Newcaſtle with us in Scotland, that there they are obliged to *reſtrict* the work of the colliers to prevent their putting out too many, whereas *here* they will not give *half work*.

It may be ſaid, Why then are not colliers brought from England? I anſwer, *firſt*, That it is attended with ſome difficulty and expence, and it is not eaſy to retain them after they come. *2dly*, By being forced into the

the brotherhood, and *allowed to work only three days* in the week, they find, at the pay, they get no more than they did in England, while their idleneſs has led them to ſpend more. 3*dly*, They are not accuſtomed to work the coal in Scotland. And, *laſtly*, the expence on any individual coal-maſter to bring colliers to Scotland is great, and, when they come, their ſtay is uncertain. Some return to England, others are *bribed* and *decoyed* to go to other works; ſo that an individual is ſeldom reimburſed the expence. Many colliers might be procured at Newcaſtle, were proper bounties held out to them.

What contributes alſo to render the colliers idle, is the *practice* many of them have of wandering from coal-work to coal-work.

Notwithſtanding the high wages they get, there are very few collieries where the colliers are not greatly *in debt* to the proprietor:

prietor: They have ſo little ſenſe or foreſight, that they *ſeldom ſave* a halfpenny; ſo that when ſickneſs or diſtreſs comes on them, they muſt borrow to keep them from ſtarving: When once they get in debt, they generally continue *adding to it* ſo long as they can get any credit: The coal-maſter himſelf is not very ſcrupulous in going conſiderable lengths *in this way*, conſidering it as a means of *tying them* to his work, and preventing another coal-maſter from engaging them, as he cannot take them without paying their debt; in this way they are often in debt to the extent of 20l. 30l. and 40 l.

When once a collier gets deep in debt, *he loſes all hopes* of redeeming it; and knowing that, if by working conſtantly he ſhall have *any thing more* at the pay than is neceſſary for his ſupport, it will be detained in part of his debt, *he takes care* that his wages ſhall be *only equal* to his immediate ſupport. Some of them again, after getting thus

thus in debt, take another courſe; they *run off*, and endeavour to conceal themſelves at ſome other coal-work; and if they find they are detected, they move again. Some of them even emigrate to England. It is the common practice to give colliers a bounty, in conſideration of their binding to ſerve a limited time. Without in the *leaſt regarding* theſe engagements, many of them run from colliery to colliery, getting a bounty from *each*, and ſtaying only till they have ſpent it.

It muſt be confeſſed, that coal-maſters are not very ſcrupulous in giving theſe bounties, and even *in enticing one another's ſervants to deſert*, or harbouring them *when they know them* to be deſerters. The preſent *ſcarcity* of hands is the temptation. But the general policy of the meaſure is bad, and attended with the worſt conſequences.

Knowing the *facility* with which a collier can find employment at any other work, he is

is *totally regardleſs* of all attempts to puniſh him for *idleneſs*, for *riot*, or for *combining* againſt his maſter; and the maſter, from the ſame cauſe, *dares not proceed* to that puniſhment which *would correct* the evil.

If he ventures to do ſo, ten to one but the whole body form a combination againſt him, and *refuſe to work* till the maſter accede to their terms. If the collier runs away, his time is loſt in wandering from one place to another. From the uncertainty of finding him out, and the *expence of bringing him back* by the aid of law, the maſter often *rather ſubmits to the loſs* than incur the expence of ſeeking after a deſerter. In many caſes, the civil power is *ſet at defiance*, and to execute a warrant at ſome coal-works requires *military aid.* The maſter finds the remedy ſo *expenſive*, that he *ſubmits* to the evil, and the colliers, from this impunity, are encouraged to *continue the practice.*

In

In England they have great advantages over Scotland in this reſpect. The law againſt colliers deſerting during the time of their engagement is *extremely rigorous*, and as conſtantly *put in execution* as it is tranſgreſſed. A deſerter breaking his engagements may be committed by any two juſtices, and kept at hard labour for ſixteen months, or he may be tried by indictment at the aſſizes, and more ſeverely puniſhed. The inſtances of bound colliers deſerting in England are therefore *not frequent*. The coal-maſters are as anxious to diſcover and give them up to puniſhment, as they would murderers.

It is evident, that unleſs the number of colliers is *multiplied in proportion* to the *increaſing* demand and conſumption of coals, ariſing from the general proſperity of the trade, manufactures, and population of the country, the ſcarcity and dearneſs of coals muſt not only continue, but *increaſe*; unleſs ſome remedy is applied, which will have

an *inſtant* operation, *we are not yet at the worſt;* and *before* any remedy which would have a gradual and progreſſive effect could operate for our relief, the caſe will be very bad, and the *coals much dearer* than they are.

At preſent, our ſituation is this, that, tho' the conſumption is increaſing, the hands for raiſing the coal are not only *decreaſing rapidly*, but, from the eſtimation theſe hands we have, are held in, from the *high* wages they receive, from the *bribes* and *temptations* held out to them, from the *difficulty* of introducing any *government* or *ſubordination*, the hands we have do not perform the *half of the work* they ought, or are capable of performing.

There are *few* trades or employments in Scotland, where a labourer can gain *ſo much* as in a colliery; the wages of an ordinary collier, at moſt works, is better than the pay of a lieutenant in the army. It requires very

very little time to learn to hew coal; a common labourer will be a good collier in *a month*. It is a *healthy*, and by no means a dangerous, employment in Scotland. The labour *is not ſevere*, nor the hours of working long. Enjoying an *equal temperature* in the mines, a collier is equally ſheltered from heat, from cold, and from rain. Yet the inſtances are not many, of the children of any other tradeſman, or labourer, being bred to be colliers, or taking to that employment. To keep up the numbers, therefore, it would be neceſſary, at leaſt, that the children of all the colliers followed that employment. This *is far*, however, from being the caſe. I have already ſaid, that the *general prejudice* againſt colliers, as being in a ſtate of degradation, ſtill prevails, notwithſtanding the law which placed them in that ſituation is repealed. Their manners and principles will, in time, be aſſimilated to that of other ranks; but to remove the prejudice which this law affixed to the character of a collier, and to *reſtore him to his rank*,

rank, and to the reſpect due to him in ſociety, is the work of time. Hence the general averſion among labourers and tradeſmen to breed their ſons to the employment of colliers, and the ſame reluctance, in the children, to be bound to that trade: Partly from the ſame cauſes which prevent colliers deriving increaſe, or recruits, from other claſſes, the numbers of the children of colliers who take to other trades *are great*. The wages which are given to other trades, particularly in the *cotton-weaving*, has, within theſe two years, occaſioned *half* the children of colliers to take to *other employments*. I lately examined into the matter at a colliery in the weſt country, where about 60 colliers were employed: I found 19 of their ſons, under 18 years, employed at the works, and about *as many* bound out as *weavers*, or to *other* trades.

Unleſs ſome remedy is *ſoon* applied, unleſs this *rapid decreaſe* in the numbers is checked, unleſs this *waſte* can be ſupplied from

from *other ſources*, coal muſt grow *ſcarcer* and ſcarcer, from the increaſing conſumption, and the decreaſing out-put, ariſing from the *diminiſhed* number of workmen.

This very ſcarcity, when once it is felt, adds in a twofold ratio to the cauſe in producing dearneſs; that is, it doubles the price on the conſumer, though the coal-maſter was to receive *no addition* to the original price. I explain myſelf: The ſhip-maſter is detained eight or ten weeks in port, before it comes to his turn to be loaded, and therefore, though he pays no more than he did formerly, when he was loaded ſo ſoon as his ſhip came into port; yet he muſt be paid for his detention in port; and when he formerly would have been ſatisfied with 1s. 6d. *per* ton, from Inverkeithing or St Davids to Leith, he muſt now have 5s. or 6s.; becauſe he is longer in performing one voyage, than he was formerly of making four. In the ſame manner, if the carter at Edinburgh goes to the pits, and waits

waits four days for his load, he muſt charge on that load the *labour of four days*. It is *theſe circumſtances* which have inflamed the price ſo much, and not the addition of price at the pits, which is *trifling*.

Had I veſſels, I would engage for the whole produce of a colliery, and would only keep ſo many as were neceſſary to carry the produce to market. There would be great profit in having no lay days. On ſame principles, I do not think it would be an unwiſe ſcheme in the community of Edinburgh, or ſome ſociety there, to agree for the whole produce of ſome of the collieries in the neighbourhood, and to employ, or allow no more carters to be employed, than were neceſſary to tranſport the produce of this colliery, the carter then would make two gates a day, and be better with 2s. of hire on his cart of coals, than he is now with 7s. or 8s. after being detained *three days* for a ſingle cart load *.

Having

* I have been informed, that ſomething of this nature

Having thus ſtated my ſentiments on the cauſe of the preſent ſcarcity of coals, I proceed to give my ideas on the means of providing a remedy.

On this ſubject, I am ſorry to ſay, there appears to me *no remedy* that will operate inſtantaneouſly for our relief *except one;* and that is, to get the duty on coal carried *coaſtwiſe taken off*, ſo that coal from Shields and Sunderland might be imported into Scotland without paying duty.

This duty is 3 s. 10 d. *per* ton, and I am aſſured that, was it removed, Newcaſtle coal could be imported into Leith under 12 s. *per* ton, allowing 7 s. for the price, and 5 s. of freight; and this, conſidering its caking and laſting quality, and its ſuperiority in theſe reſpects to Scots coal, would be found as cheap as the latter at 9 s. 6 d.

Here

ture has taken place about Glaſgow; and the conſequence of which is, that the *coal-maſter* receives *more*, and the *conſumer* pays *leſs*.

Here then is a certain remedy, provided Government can be prevailed on to relinquiſh this tax; which in itſelf is partial, and particularly oppreſſive to the northern parts of Scotland, which contain no coal, and which at preſent pay almoſt the whole of this tax collected in Scotland.

The whole amount of it *communibus annis*, a few years ago, was only 3000 l. it is now above 10,000 l.; and it is ſaid that Government are ſo ſenſible of the impolicy of this tax, that they are extremely well diſpoſed to relinquiſh it, or at leaſt to commute it for another, leſs partial in its nature, and leſs oppreſſive in its operation.

On this ſubject, I recommend to the attention of the public, a plan communicated in an eſſay, publiſhed about three years ago, addreſſed to the Magiſtrates of Aberdeen. It gives a hiſtory of this tax, and the mode it was introduced on us in Scotland, *contrary to the ſpirit of the Union*; and it contains

tains a plan for a commutation tax, by eſtabliſhing, in lieu of it, 40 s. additional on the ſtills uſed for brewing whiſky in the Highland diſtrict; which would then pay 3 l. while thoſe in the ſouth continued to pay 3 l.; and, in addition to this, the latter to pay 3 l. on the *rectifying ſtills*, which at preſent are made uſe of as an engine to *defraud Government*. By the computations in this eſſay, drawn from *actual* calculation of the licenſed ſtills for two years, (and they are *much increaſed ſince*), it would have produced about 80,000 l. to Government yearly, and it would have added about twopence the quart to the price of ſpirits. If it had added 1 s. a quart to the price of this commodity, and checked the preſent *immoderate* uſe of it, *ſo fatal to the morals and health of the lower claſs*, it would have had ſtill more beneficial conſequences *.

* The partial and oppreſſive nature of this tax on coals not being generally underſtood, an abſtract of the eſſay, and plan of commutation there ſuggeſted, will be found in the Appendix, No. II.

It is ſaid, that this ſcheme was not agreeable to two ſets of men: That the landed gentry in the Highland diſtrict were againſt it, becauſe they ſuppoſed it would have reduced the price of their barley, or bigg; and the coal-maſters in the Firth of Forth were againſt it, becauſe they apprehended the introduction of Newcaſtle coal would keep down the price of *their* coal. It is even ſaid, that at a meeting of coal-maſters in Edinburgh lately, they came to ſome reſolutions *of oppoſing* ſuch a meaſure.

At the ſame time, I am *far* from being ſatisfied, that the meaſure would be attended with that prejudice to the ſhippers of coal on the Forth they *ſeem* to conceive.

The Newcaſtle and Sunderland coal is at this moment in the excluſive poſſeſſion of the whole trade and ſupply of water-born coal on the Eaſt Coaſt, *without the limits* of the Firth of Forth.

The

The *difference of freight* from Newcaſtle *muſt always ſecure* to the coal-maſters *within the limits* of the Firth of Forth that market; *unleſs it riſe to an extravagant price*, or the coal raiſed within the limits, *as at preſent*, be not ſufficient for the conſumption: The Newcaſtle coal *ought* to come *to our aid*, in both caſes. In the firſt caſe, it is *moſt juſt* that we ſhould have *this reſource*. In the ſecond caſe, the coal-maſter in Scotland *is not injured*.

Theſe coal-maſters of the Firth of Forth ought alſo to recollect, that, by favour of the Legiſlature, and bye-laws, the juſtice and policy of which *are not ſo obvious*, they enjoy a *monopoly* of the manufacture of ſea-ſalt for general uſe in Scotland, under cover of which *they levy from the community upwards* of 18,000 l. Sterling *per annum*, for ſalt of an *inferior ſpecies*, more than we would pay for rock-ſalt, were we permitted to import it from the mines in England, to be refined in Scotland for general uſe.

The

The ſalt manufactured from ſea water contains a *bitterneſs*, which renders it *unfit for curing fiſh*, *butter*, *or beef*, to keep for any time, or for long voyages. It is far *inferior* in every reſpect to the rock-ſalt. Yet we are made to pay for the prime coſt of ſea-ſalt, manufactured in the Firth, *two ſhillings per* buſhel, excluſive of duty. The rock-ſalt, when refined, was ſold in England, within theſe few years, at 3d. *per* buſhel; at preſent it coſts 6 d. *per* buſhel, excluſive of the duty *.

There is reaſon, however, to think, that, if Government could be reconciled to the plan of taking off the coaſt-duty on coal, an oppoſition from *partial* and *intereſted individuals* would not prevail againſt a meaſure of *public utility*.

As

* This ſeems to be ſo contrary to the principles of ſound policy, and material juſtice, that it may be proper to give ſome further explanation, in juſtification of what is ſtated in the text. See Appendix, No. I.

As the ſcheme here ſuggeſted, is to produce a revenue of *four times the amount* of the preſent coal tax, I would propoſe to make ſome compenſation to the proprietors of coals in Scotland, for the *chance* of coal from England being thus introduced, by creating, out of this additional revenue ariſing from ſpirits, a fund of 4000l. or 5000l. to be veſted in a board of truſtees, and employed by them, *in bounties*, for the purpoſe of *increaſing the number of colliers*, for *puniſhing deſerters*, for *preventing combinations*, and for introducing ſuch *rules* and *regulations* as might operate *a reformation* among that claſs of mankind, and produce *ſteady* and *regular* work. It is by a ſimilar inſtitution, and by ſimilar bounties, that the linen trade of Scotland maintained itſelf againſt the Iriſh. *It would preſerve to the Scots coal the Scots markets at a reaſonable price.* If the above bounty is too ſmall for that purpoſe, make it larger: Let it operate as a countervailing or protecting duty, but ſo as *not to raiſe* the price on the conſumer too high,

high, at ſame time that it ſecured the Scots market to Scots coal.

But if this plan cannot be effected, if the coaſt-duty on coals cannot be diſpenſed with, if nothing can be got from Government to be a fund for bounties, and for introducing *proper rules* and *regulations*, it appears to me, that the next beſt plan that can be followed, would be to impoſe a *tax* on the coal *at the pits* for raiſing a fund *for the above purboſes.*

When I ſtate the total quantity of coal, raiſed in Scotland annually, at *a million of tons*, I do not think that I over-rate them; and ſuppoſe theſe to pay one penny *per* ton to this fund, it would produce about 4100l. annually. Thoſe who are acquainted with the manner of keeping colliery books, where the colliers, and many others, are paid on the quantity put out, or ſold, muſt be ſenſible, that, if the manager of every colliery was bound to make a return of the quanti-

ty

ty raiſed; if the books were to be open to the inſpection of a general ſurveyor, this fund could be collected all over Scotland, without the poſſibility of frauds being committed, at the expence of 200 l. or 300 l. A ſecretary and clerk, and an office, would be neceſſary, and three directors choſen annually by the general body of truſtees, to hold a board once a week; and theſe three acting directors to be allowed a ſalary. The total expence of collecting, of the ſecretary and clerk, of an office, and of three acting directors, would be under 1000 l.

There then remains a fund of 3000 l. at the diſpoſal of the board, which I would apply in this way.

Firſt, To obtain an act of Parliament for the eſtabliſhment of ſuch a board, the levying this tax, ſtating the powers and regulations under which they were to act.

Secondly,

Secondly, In ſame act, to make rules for ſummary proceedings, and *rigorous puniſhment*, in the caſe of colliers *deſerting*, or *entering into combinations not to work*, or to raiſe their wages.

To make the offences cogniſable by the judge-ordinary, or any juſtice of peace.

Thirdly, Theſe truſtees, or board, to *have notice ſent them of all deſerters*, and to be at the expence of advertiſing them, if they think proper; to apprehend and puniſh them, according to the rules in this act.

Fourthly, To put certain penalties *on the maſters who ſhall employ the perſons ſo advertiſed*, without the leave of this board, knowing them to be the perſons there deſcribed, cogniſable and leviable in ſame ſummary way; with liberty of appeal, or ſuſpenſion, after final ſentence, and *finding caution to pay the double coſts*, in caſe of being *affirmed*.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, The ſecretary of this board may proſecute in his own name all offences, and levy the fines at the diſpoſal of the board.

Sixthly, As encouragement and bounties for colliers, this board at liberty to indent and bind to any coal-works pariſh children from any part of Scotland where they can be procured, with conſent of the heritors and ſeſſion, and to be at all the expence of removing them to the work where they are to ſerve.

Seventhly, To give a premium of or ſome ſuch ſum, to every man of 17 years of age, and upwards, who has never wrought as a miner, or collier, below ground, and who ſhall indent himſelf at any coal-work, to work conſtantly for a year, upon producing proper credible evidence, by his own affidavit, and the affidavit of the overſman in the pit, and the manager of the work where he ſerved, of having duly ſerved his indenture accordingly.

I am confident, that, by following ſome plan of this nature, colliers would at laſt be brought into the *ſame order and ſubordination with other claſſes of tradeſmen and labourers*, that they would ſoon be more reſpected, and find themſelves more comfortable than at preſent.

I am equally ſatisfied, that, by the ſame means, numbers would be prevailed on to become colliers. There is no difficulty in learning to cut coal. A perſon uſed to quarry ſtones, and to handle a pick and mall, is a collier. Any labourer, in the courſe of a week, will make a ſhilling a day at the coal wall; in the courſe of a month or ſix weeks, he can make two ſhillings; and, in a ſhort time, he is a complete collier. Some of the beſt workmen I ever knew were common labourers, who took to the coal wall; and they are generally the *ſteadieſt workers*, not being given ſo much to *diſſipation and drink* as thoſe who are brought up colliers from their infancy. When once the firſt prejudices

dices are got over, and a perſon has been accuſtomed a few weeks to work in the mine, he finds his ſituation *ſo comfortable*, and his wages *ſo high*, compared to labourers on the ſurface, that there is no chance of his returning to be a labourer above ground. Colliers would in time be multiplied and increaſed, and *coals of courſe become plenty*. Cheapneſs is the conſequence of plenty.

I have endeavoured to treat a ſubject of ſuch general importance on liberal principles, without any *partiality to local ſituations*, and without intention to favour individuals.

Satisfied as I am, that ſound policy, in all ſuch caſes, requires the application of practical rules and regulations to general principles; the plans I have ſuggeſted are founded on this broad baſis. They are not *partial or temporary remedies*, they will ſhed their influence equally on *all parts* of Scotland;

land; their operation is not confined to the *inſtant*, they will have the more effect the longer they are applied.

The means here ſuggeſted for rendering coal cheaper in Edinburgh, are therefore *very different* from thoſe which the Magiſtrates have followed, and very *different from any* they ſeem to have under contemplation.

I obſerve, by advertiſements and paragraphs in the newſpapers, that the Magiſtrates have offered a bounty of 1s. *per* deal on coals imported into Leith, beſides exemption from the harbour dues; and that they have agreed to give a ſimilar bounty on coal brought by land carriage from a colliery 27 *miles to the weſtward*. A deal of coal, which is the provincial meaſure about Edinburgh and Leith, weighs 23 hundred weight. But ſuppoſing this plan of bounty ſhould have ſome effect to reduce the price of coal to the conſumer in Edinburgh for

for the inſtant, it is evident the effect is *local* and *temporary* only; and that, as the commodity is *every where ſcarce*, the giving bounties to draw it to Edinburgh *is juſt raiſing the price on the conſumers in ſome other quarter in Scotland, in the ſame proportion as it is rendered cheaper in Edinburgh by ſuch bounties.* The natural and neceſſary effect of which is, that the price *muſt riſe* in that quarter from which it is now drawn by ſuch bounties, until it come to a level, when theſe bounties cannot operate without being *increaſed;* and then, increaſe them as you will, the *ſame effect* will flow from the ſame cauſe.

Again, ſuppoſe 20,000 tons of coal are brought into Edinburgh, by means of ſuch bounties, which otherwiſe would not have reached it; and if we do not allow this quantity, at leaſt, to have received the bounty, it has had no great effect; this, at 1 s. *per* ton, will coſt the town 1000 l. bounty.

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Had this money been employed in bringing down colliers from England to be put in mines round Edinburgh, I have every reaſon to believe it would have produced, at 5l. a man, 200 more colliers than are now employed; and theſe 200 colliers would have raiſed, on the moſt moderate computation, above 80,000 ton of coal in one year, which would not only have made coal very plenty in Edinburgh, but relieved many places *now in diſtreſs* for coal, which are *drawn from them to Edinburgh and Leith by the high prices and bounties there given.*

Even had the ſame money been employed in procuring apprentices to colliers, or labourers to go into coal pits, this would have had general beneficial conſequences; whereas, in the manner the money has been employed, in giving bounties on the coal imported into Edinburgh, *it is ſtarving one part of the country to feed another:* It does not add to the general production; it tends

tends more *to raiſe* than to lower the price; in ſhort, the general policy of the meaſure is extremely bad.

Neither do I conceive, that the *ſcheme* of bringing coals 27 *miles by land* to Edinburgh, can poſſibly be of long continuance, or tend to reduce the prices for any time. To bring half a ton of coal ſuch a diſtance would require the labour of a man and horſe for *three days;* and ſuppoſe they were to have only half a crown a day, this would raiſe the *carriage alone to* 15*s.* 8*d. a ton*, which *ſeems not to promiſe* much reſtriction on the price.

Far be it from me, in ſo ſaying, to mean any reflection on the Magiſtrates of Edinburgh. The ſcarcity of coal was equally unforeſeen and unexpected. Had not ſteps been taken to procure an inſtant ſupply, the diſtreſs on the poor might have become ſtill more ſerious and alarming. In ſuch a ſituation it was natural, and it was neceſſary,

to

to take the *firſt* remedy that occurred to procure this ſupply. That of a bounty was judged to have that tendency; and though the remedy was partial, local, and temporary only, yet in ſuch an emergency it was excuſable, and the neareſt and readieſt. The citizens of Edinburgh are under equal obligations to the gentlemen who, in this exigency, ſtepped forward to ſecond the efforts of the Magiſtrates, and to offer to bring coal to Edinburgh, without *any poſſible profit or advantage* to themſelves: But inſtances of ſuch ſpirit and generoſity are too precarious to rely on as a *permanent mode* of ſupplying the community.

The reſolutions of ſome of the trades of Edinburgh *are not entitled* to be treated with *ſame reſpect:* Some of them, when met, entered into reſolutions, as a body, which they advertiſed, importing, that they *would not purchaſe, or make uſe of, any coal raiſed at the collieries near Edinburgh.* Such a reſolution is *too ludicrous* to merit any ſerious notice;

notice; it ſhows only the danger that might reſult from *raſh meaſures:* It was fortunate for the public, as well as individuals, that theſe traders were not able to carry their reſolutions into general practice. They could not perſuade the community, in a fit of ſpleen, *to ſhut up the collieries round the town*, or that this *was the way* to get coal in *greater quantities or cheaper.*

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Rock-Salt.

IN England, particularly in Cheſhire, there is an inexhauſtible ſtratum of rock-ſalt. It contains ſo few earthy particles, that the law allows 65 pound of the raw material, when refined, to yield 56 pounds of white ſalt. When diſſolved, therefore, it yields a ſtrong brine, which, being boiled in pans, makes fine ſalt, equal to any foreign ſalt. In England, particularly at Liverpool, the trade in this article, and the export to the Baltic, is aſtoniſhing.

Prior to the Union, probably for the convenience of collecting the duty, the manufacture

facture in England was confined to places ſituated within 10 miles of the pits. But, by the act 2d Anne, rock-ſalt was allowed to be exported to Scotland, and to be refined there without paying duty in England. So ſtood matters at the Union, when the *Exciſe* and *Cuſtomhouſe laws* were, by one *lumping article* in the treaty, transferred to Scotland. With this *transfer by the lump*, we were alſo *ſuppoſed* to have transferred the law of England, reſtraining the refining of rock-ſalt to places within 10 miles of the pits where rock-ſalt is taken out.

By this interpretation we loſt the rock-ſalt altogether; and it cannot be imported into Scotland for general conſumption, either in a raw or refined ſtate.

In England, however, they have, by ſucceſſive acts of Parliament, *relieved* themſelves from the reſtraint of the manufactory being confined within 10 miles of the pits. It has been extended, by ſpecial acts, to

twenty

twenty different places in England, and has never been refuſed to any. Even the *Iriſh* are allowed to export the rock-ſalt, duty free, to be refined in Ireland, and an immenſe trade is carried on there, and the ſalt manufactured in Ireland, by means of the rock from England, and coal from Scotland, is *ſmuggled in vaſt quantities* into the weſt of England and Scotland. But the door continues *ſtill ſhut againſt Scotland.* The conſequence is, that, except what is *ſmuggled from Ireland*, we can have no other ſalt for general uſe but what is manufactured from ſea water. This manufacture is of courſe confined to the Firth of Forth, and is monopolized by the coal-maſters there, *who have formed themſelves into a ſociety for keeping up the price.* Accordingly, though this ſalt, made from ſea water, is of a *very inferior quality*, and contains a bittern which is equally pernicious to *the flavour* and to the *preſervation of ſubſtances* with which it is mixed; though it is *unfit for curing fiſh, butter, or beef*, to keep for any length of time;

time; yet matters are *ſo contrived by the ſociety*, that the price of this *inferior ſalt*, excluſive of the duty, is 2 *s. the buſhel*, or, with the duty of 1 s. 6 d. 3 s. 6 d. *per* buſhel; and I have been told, *that within theſe few weeks this ſociety entered into a reſolution to raiſe the price:* Whereas the rock-ſalt, after being refined, and of a quality ſo *far ſuperior* to ſalt made from ſea water, coſts only 6 *d. per buſhel*, excluſive of duty. The total duties paid in Scotland, at 1 s. 6 d. *per* buſhel, do not produce, one year with another, above 13,000 l. To levy this, a ſeparate Salt Board, and a ſeparate and diſtinct ſet of revenue officers, are ſupported. The mode of collecting, too, neceſſarily opens the way to *great frauds* in the collection. Of the quantity made, *great part pays no duty at all.*

By allowing the rock-ſalt to be imported from England, the duty could be levied at *ſmall expence, without the poſſibility of fraud;* becauſe bonds could be taken in England,

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at the pits, for the high duties payable there, to be cancelled only on a certificate being produced of its having been landed in Scotland, and of its having paid the Scots duty. The revenue would gain thereby, and about 20,000 l. would be ſaved by the conſumers in the price.

Theſe laws have been long felt as a grievance; they have been found very *injurious to the fiſhings;* and temporary laws have been made, from time to time, for *the relief of the fiſhery only.* But they are ſo *complex* in their operations, *require ſo many forms*, and ſo many rules, which are *impracticable* or inconſiſtent with the fiſhery, that it is now generally underſtood, that, without a *free importation of rock-ſalt into Scotland, the fiſhery cannot ſucceed.*

Some years ago, the then Lord Advocate of Scotland, upon an application to him from ſome counties and ſome boroughs in Scotland, and *at the requeſt of the Britiſh Fiſhing*

Fiſhing Society, moved, in the Houſe of Commons, for leave to bring in a bill to allow the free importation of rock-ſalt into Scotland, on paying the Scots duty. The coal-maſters on the *Firth of Forth* immediately took the alarm, and *entered into an aſſociation to oppoſe it.*

Before the bill was brought in, the then Lord Advocate, who was to take the lead in the buſineſs, vacated his ſeat, on his appointment to a higher office. Since that time, *no Member of Parliament* has reſumed the buſineſs, *and the country, who feels and ſees the injury more and more every day, are left under the weight of it.*

No. II.

The Duty *on* Coal.

THIS tax ſeems to have been firſt introduced in the time of Oliver Cromwell. It was extended to Scotland, as well as England. But, in reſpect of the ſuppoſed *inferiority* of Scots coal, the duty on that coal, *even when carried into England, was much leſs than on the Engliſh coal.*

This tax fell with the Reſtoration; but, during the popular and ſucceſsful war in the beginning of Queen Anne's reign, the Engliſh Parliament again ventured to impoſe a tax on coal carried coaſtwiſe for a limited period.

Our anceſtors, who had felt the oppreſſive nature of this tax on coal, in the time of

Cromwell, ſeem to have been particularly anxious that, in framing the Treaty of Union, coal in Scotland ſhould be exempted from paying duty. By the 12th article of the Union, it is provided, " That, du- " ring the continuance of the duties pay- " able in England on coals, *Scotland ſhall* " *not be charged therewith for coals conſumed* " *there*, but ſhall be charged with the ſame " duties as in England, for coals not con- " ſumed in Scotland."

Still the Scots commiſſioners, under the apprehenſion of this duty on coal being extended, upon ſome pretext or other, to Scotland, were deſirous of making ſome expreſs proviſion againſt it.

They were, however, prevailed on to reſt ſatisfied with the following declaration: " And ſeeing it cannot be ſuppoſed, that " the Parliament of Great Britain will ever " lay any ſort of burdens on the kingdoms " but what they will find of neceſſity at

" the

" the time, for the good and preſervation
" of the whole, and with due regard to the
" circumſtances and ability of every part
" of the united kingdom; therefore it is
" agreed, that there be no further exemp-
" tion inſiſted upon for any part of the
" united kingdom; but that the conſidera-
" tion of any farther exemptions, beyond
" what are already agreed on in this treaty,
" ſhall be left to the determination of the
" Parliament of Great Britain."

It ſoon appeared that no reliance could be put on general proteſtations of this nature. The law which impoſed this duty on coal in England, prior to the Union, was allowed to expire; and an act of the Britiſh Parliament impoſed a duty on water-born coal, or coal carried coaſtwiſe, and *extended* the duty to the *whole iſland* of Great Britain. By this and ſubſequent acts, this duty is now 3 s. 8 d. *per* ton; and, as it gives occaſion to the granting of bonds for clearances at the cuſtomhouſe, and to

all

all that long train of fees and perquiſites to cuſtomhouſe officers, we may fairly ſtate the duty at 4s.; and as the trade, in advancing this duty, muſt have a profit on it, we muſt allow that the duty raiſes the price to the conſumer at leaſt 4s. 6d. every ton; or, in other words, that it is an advance of *cent. per cent.* on the original price of the commodity.

As this duty only affected coals carried coaſtwiſe, it did not touch thoſe who were ſo happily ſituated as to be ſupplied from pits by land carriage. It alſo exempted from duties all coal within the limits of the Friths of Forth and Clyde. The limits of the Frith of Forth extend from St Abbe's Head on the ſouth, to the Redhead near Arbroath on the north, comprehending, under the exemption, all the fertile and richeſt counties in Scotland, and *probably all theſe parts of Scotland within which coal was uſed at the time:* The extenſion of this tax, therefore, to

to other parts of Scotland was *not oppoſed at the time*, being then thought a matter of ſo *little moment* as to have ſlipped through without attention from the repreſentatives in Parliament of thoſe parts of Scotland liable to the payment of this duty.

Accordingly it appears, *that, for many years after it was impoſed, it produced ſcarce any thing in Scotland;* turf, or peats, ſeems then univerſally to have been the fuel uſed in theſe parts of Scotland liable to this tax. As peats or turf, however, came to be *exhauſted*, and to become ſcarcer and dearer; as the expence of labour began to increaſe, and be of ſome value; and as theſe parts of Scotland began to aſſume ſome ſort of activity in manufactures, agriculture, and proſperity, this tax has gradually advanced from 200 l. when firſt impoſed, to 12,000l. which it is now at this day. Its progreſs of late years has been extremely rapid. From a report made by a committee in the Houſe of Commons, in 1785, it was then only

only 3000l.; and even then it is ſtigmatiſed by this committee as a tax *highly impolitic and partial* in its nature and operation, and particularly oppreſſive in thoſe parts of Scotland where it took effect.

This tax, therefore, as it is now eſtabliſhed, affects only that part of Scotland lying to the north of the line above deſcribed, that is, Kincardine, Aberdeenſhire, Banffshire, Moray, Nairn, Cromarty, Inverneſs, Sutherland, Caithneſs; and on the weſt, Argyleſhire and Bute; the counties lying within the limits of the Frith of Forth, that is, Mid-Lothian, Eaſt-Lothian, Berwick, Weſt-Lothian, Stirling, Fife, Kinroſs, Clackmannan, Perthſhire, and the greater part of Angus, are exempted from the operation of this tax, becauſe coal abounds in moſt of theſe counties, and they may be carried from the pits to their doors; and becauſe to thoſe at any diſtance from the pit, they can be carried by a navigation which does not expoſe them to this tax. It is the ſame on the other ſide

of

of the iſland; the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, and Ayr, every where abound with coal and valuable mines.

One therefore *can ſcarcely figure a tax more partial and more impolitic.* The *rich* and *fertile* counties of Scotland, who, having *the pits at their doors*, can of courſe be ſupplied with coal at *a cheap rate*, are *wholly exempted* from the tax; while the *unfortunate inhabitants* of the *northern* and *Highland* diſtricts, to whom this coal muſt *at all events come dear*, from the addition of *freight by ſea*, and carriage by land, are *alone loaded with this tax.*

One ſhould have thought there would have been more juſtice, as there certainly would have been leſs hardſhip, in *reverſing this ſyſtem.* To have laid on the tax at the pit-mouth, to be paid by thoſe who could ſupply themſelves at a *cheap rate* by land carriage, and by thoſe fortunate inhabitants who poſſeſſed the moſt fertile parts of Scotland;

land; and that thoſe again to whom coal came by ſea, inflamed in the price by the *expence of freight*, &c. and who dwell in the *poor and barren regions* of the *north*, ought to have been allowed a *drawback* of the duties payable at the pit.

There is, in fact, no difference in opinion reſpecting the impolitic, partial, and oppreſſive nature of this tax. Thoſe who have more particular acceſs of being acquainted with theſe counties liable to this tax, and to mark its *baneful conſequences*, in *repreſſing every effort of genius, of induſtry, and activity, both in manufactures and agriculture*, cannot ſuppreſs a riſing ſentiment of indignation, that it ſhould be ſuffered *ſo long to exiſt*.

But, notwithſtanding no difference of ſentiments prevails on this ſubject, the ſuppreſſion of this tax has been attended with difficulties.

It unluckily happens, that, in impoſing this tax, we are coupled with England; the ſame acts of Parliament impoſe the ſame tax on coal carried coaſtwiſe in England. In London, they have even ſubjected themſelves to an additional duty of 3 s. on coal for *building churches*, ſo that they pay above 8 s. *per* ton. In other parts of England, they pay no more on coal carried coaſtwiſe than we do in Scotland.

The duty paid in Scotland, at the ſame time that it is extremely oppreſſive, is ſo unproductive as not to be an object of revenue, and certainly would be taken off, were it not that this duty forms a great branch of revenue in England, and that a difficulty ariſes how to relieve us in Scotland from this tax, and continue it in England, where it is ſaid to produce a revenue of about 500,000 l. of which London alone pays about 400,000 l.

It has been already obſerved, that, in the time of Lord North's adminiſtration, a committee of the Houſe of Commons made a report, urging ſtrongly the baneful effects and pernicious conſequences reſulting from this tax in Scotland, and the *ſound policy* of relieving that part of the country ſubject to that tax. The Miniſter was perfectly ſatisfied of this, and urged the gentlemen connected with Scotland to propoſe ſome other tax, with which it might be commuted, and which would not be ſo partial; and promiſed his concurrence in any plan of this kind which was acceptable to the country.

Various meetings took place in London, of the Noblemen and Gentlemen particularly connected with Scotland, to endeavour to ſuggeſt and fix on ſome tax to be propoſed as a commutation for this coal tax. But *they could not agree* on any plan of this nature; the matter languiſhed, and at laſt *dropped* altogether.

It was certainly very unfortunate that this commutation did not then take place: The whole duty did not then exceed 3000*l.* One ſhould have thought it no difficult matter to have found a commutation for this *ſmall ſum.* It is unfortunate that, at all events, the progreſs and increaſe of it was not then arreſted.

In 1785, this matter was again agitated in various meetings, at London, of Noblemen and Gentlemen connected with Scotland; and it was generally underſtood, that the preſent Miniſter ſaw this tax on coal in Scotland *in the ſame light* with his predeceſſors, and was equally *well diſpoſed* to relieve the country thereof.

In the meantime, however, the *tax ſtill continues*, and the country continues to feel the oppreſſion *more and more* every day.

The preſent ſeems to be a *very favourable period* to make ſome exertion to obtain relief

relief for this tax. The letters lately wrote by the Secretary of State to the Sheriffs of the northern counties, inquiring into their ſtate, in reſpect to food and fuel, ſhews a *laudable attention* on the part of Government to remove any grievances actually exiſting; and the anſwer *univerſally* returned by all theſe counties complaining of the intolerable oppreſſion of the duty on coal as the *only grievance*, gives a fair opportunity for the grounds of an application to Parliament. There is reaſon to think this application would now find ſupport from Edinburgh, and from other quarters in Scotland, who never till now ſuppoſed they could be affected by this duty.

The following was the ſcheme of a commutation tax propoſed in the year 1790, alluded to in the preceding eſſay.

No.

No. III.

Relative to the DISTILLERS *in Scotland, and for impoſing an Additional Licence Duty on Stills for brewing* WHISKY, *as a Commutation for the* COAL TAX.

TO make this ſcheme of a commutation for the tax on coal intelligible, it will be neceſſary to give a ſhort hiſtory of the laws reſpecting the diſtillers in Scotland.

The diſtillers in London, though few in number, being confined to about ten houſes, are, notwithſtanding, a very powerful and wealthy body; being cloſely united among themſelves, and enjoying many advantages from their contiguity to the porter breweries for the ſupply of freſh yeaſt, they have in a manner monopolized this trade in England. The revenue they pay to Government

is

is immenſe, at this moment not under 700,000l. *per annum;* they think themſelves therefore well entitled to the notice and protection of Government.

The Scots diſtillers, however, found their way into the London market with ſpirits diſtilled in Scotland. At firſt the quantities were ſmall; but, in the progreſs of a few years, the diſtilleries in Scotland were extended on ſuch a ſcale, as to become formidable rivals to the London diſtillers in their own market.

The London diſtillers, with the view of ſhutting this market againſt the Scots, entered into reſolutions for lowering the price in London, and continued to reduce the price lower and lower, in expectation that the Scot diſtillers could not hold out, and that they would either abandon the market, or become bankrupt.

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The Scots diſtillers, however, continued to pour in their ſpirits into the London market in great quantities.

As the London diſtillers were ſelling at a price below coſt, and were loſing money, they naturally concluded, that the Scots would not have held out ſo long if they had not met with ſome indulgences in the levying and collecting the duties in Scotland. They inſtituted inquiries in the Houſe of Commons, they remonſtrated to the Treaſury, the conſequence of which was, that the Board of Exciſe in Scotland were called on to exact the moſt rigorous attention from their officers, to the collecting the duties, and preventing ſmuggling.

The northern and Highland diſtricts of Scotland were then filled with ſmall ſtills, which paid no duty. Every farmer, and every cotter, had a ſmall pot. Such proceedings of the exciſe naturally led into rigorous exertions, to put a ſtop to theſe illegal

gal ſmall ſtills, as well as to the collection of the duties on the larger works.

Theſe meaſures ſeem to have excited a general ferment over Scotland. The *diſtillers made the farmer believe* there was an intention to ſtop the diſtillery in Scotland, and the farmer *complained to the landlord*, that the fall of the diſtillery in Scotland would be the *fall of the price* of grain, and of courſe the *fall of rents*. *Argumentum ad hominem*. The tenants in the northern and Highland diſtricts were ſtill more clamorous; they repreſented their grain to be of ſuch an inferior quality, that, unleſs they were allowed to diſtil it, they could find no market for it.

Every one muſt remember the *artificial* ferment thus raiſed;—meetings of pariſhes, meetings of counties, general meetings at Edinburgh of the landed intereſt. The kingdom ſeemed to be all in agitation.

There

There was a double miſtake in all this buſineſs; the duties on ſpirits diſtilled in Scotland, and ſent to England, were probably collected with as much correctneſs as on thoſe diſtilled in London, and from the low price in London, the Scots diſtillers were ſuffering an equal loſs with the London diſtillers. The difference lay here, that the Engliſh diſtillers being *wealthy*, and connected in a body, were not afraid to tell their loſſes, and to clamour loudly, that they would be ruined by the low price to which ſpirits were reduced by the ſmuggling from Scotland. Theſe complaints had *an air* of candour, as the Engliſh diſtillers offered to ſhew their books, and the extent of their loſſes. The misfortune of the Scots diſtillers, in this contention, was, that they had *no capital*, that they maintained the trade *by credit* procured from others, and that they durſt not ſay they were loſing as much as the Engliſh diſtillers; becauſe, had they allowed this idea to go out, they would

have *loſt the credit* on which they ſtood, and would have immediately fallen.

The other miſtake was, *in ſuppoſing* the diſtillery in Scotland, and particularly in the Highlands, ſo eſſential to the landed intereſt: *Four fifths of the grain* diſtilled in Scotland is *Engliſh barley;* the bear, or bigg, of the Highlands is wholly *unfit* for being malted or diſtilled; *and, in a country which does not produce one third of the grain neceſſary for the ſubſiſtence of the inhabitants, it cannot be wiſe policy to encourage them to convert the little they do produce into a liquid equally pernicious to their health and morals.*

In this ſtate of matters, it was underſtood that the Miniſter was willing to let the landed intereſt of Scotland *get any law they pleaſed, provided* they kept the ſpirit thus brewed in Scotland among themſelves, and *did not ſend it to England to injure the revenue there.* The reſult was, the introduction

tion of the licenſe duty, by which we have certainly got *whiſky as cheap as beer*; and a labourer in Scotland can get drunk *for a penny*. But no man will ſay, that, with this *inundation of ſpirits, we have improved the health, the induſtry, or the morals of the lower claſs of the people in Scotland.*

By the plan of theſe acts of Parliament, the kingdom of Scotland is divided into two diſtricts, and an *ideal* line was drawn acroſs the country; the one diſtrict to be diſtinguiſhed by the name of the Highland, and the other the Low Country diſtrict.

In the firſt, (25th George III.) ſtills of 40 gallons were to be licenſed, on paying a duty of 20 s. *per* gallon on the cubical contents, and be further exempted from malt duties.

This act was followed, in the ſubſequent year, (26th George III.) by a licenſe duty of 30 s. on the cubical contents of ſtills in the

the low country diſtrict; this laſt has ſince been increaſed to 3 l. while the Highland diſtrict ſtill continues to pay as formerly.

By the Highland act, it is computed that a ſtill of 40 gallons would manufacture 250 bolls barley, and the produce would be 1660 gallons pure ſpirit, and that the ſurplus beyond that quantity ſhould be charged the former duty: But, as the act of the 26th of the King, which followed in the ſubſequent year, repealed all former duties by the lump, and eſtabliſhed *no rule* for charges on ſurpluſes on the Highland ſtills, they now *totally eſcape* without paying any duties on theſe, and are left to uſe what malt, and to draw from it any quantity of ſpirits they pleaſe.

Working, therefore, as they do, againſt time, they will certainly uſe *the beſt barley*, they will uſe *Engliſh barley*. A ſtill, of the contents of 40 gallons, will produce, from Engliſh barley, *five times the quantity of ſpi-*

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rits mentioned in the act, and therefore the ſtatute defeats the very object it holds out to view.

In fact, when we add the *total exemption from malt duty* for ſpirits thus diſtilled in the Highland diſtrict, theſe ſtills, or the ſpirits there produced, in place of paying a duty, actually *get a premium for converting this malt into whiſky in place of beer.* The Highland act *ſuppoſes* 250 bolls of barley, or 1500 buſhels of malt, to produce 1660 gallons ſpirits, being about 6 *gallons* a boll. Were the grain, or bigg, in theſe countries ſo very inferior in quality, *it is certainly not worth the expence of diſtilling*, when *Engliſh barley* can be had near as cheap, which is *known to produce* 13 *or* 14 *gallons*, 1 *to* 10 *over hydrometer proof.* The calculations in this act are *wholly fallacious.* But ſuppoſing them ever ſo juſt, and that 1500 buſhels of malt produce only 1660 gallons of ſpirits, the duty on the malt alone would produce 39 l. 7 s. 6 d. and the whole duty payable

payable to Government, both on the malt and ſtill, being only 40l. I may fairly ſay that the Government, by this act, pays *a premium* to the diſtiller in the Highlands, in place of receiving any duties.

The Highland act ſeems to be founded on erroneous principles of policy and taxations. In making ſo *unequal duties* in different diſtricts, it was really laying down a *temptation to ſmuggle*. There was *not a poſſibility* of preventing theſe ſpirits, which were diſtilled in a diſtrict which paid no duty, from finding their way into the diſtrict which paid the duty. The line which divides the country is *whimſically* and *capriciouſly* drawn. The Highland diſtrict comprehends the *Carſe of Gowrie*, and *ſome of the beſt grain diſtricts in Scotland.*

The diſtillers in the low country diſtrict would have been overwhelmed with the ſpirits ſmuggled in upon them, had they not fallen upon a device, upon their part, equal-

ly

ly hurtful to the revenue. The law only impoſes a halfpenny the gallon on rectifying ſtills; theſe, therefore, were erected at every diſtillery contiguous to the ſpirit ſtills, and uſed for diſtilling low wines.

To rectify ſpirits requires only a ſtill of the fourth part of the contents of the ſtills for low wines, uſed for brewing ſame quantity of ſpi.its; but great quantities of ſpirits are drunk in Scotland, as whiſky, without being rectified, or aſſimilated to brandy, rum, &c. The Highlanders like the flavour of whiſky; but ſuppoſing the whole ſpirits diſtilled in the low country diſtrict to be rectified, ſtills of one fourth of the contents of the low wine ſtills only are neceſſary.

The following was the ſtate of the diſtillery in Scotland for the year ending 1ſt July 1790.

Gallons

Gallons of Co[illegible] of Entered Stills.

14912	by the Highland diſtrict in full as a compoſition for malt and ſpirit duty, at 20s.	L.	14912	0 0
8833	by the diſtillers in the low country diſtrict, at 3l. *per* gallon -		26499	0 0
22403	by rectifiers and compounders, at ½ d. - - - - - - - - -		46	13 5
46148	gallons in all, paying a duty of - - -	L.	41547	13 5

It is propoſed that the Highland diſtrict ſhould pay the ſame licence duty with the low country, ſtill retaining their *exemption* from the malt duty, which is more than equal to 3l. *per* gallon on the ſtill; therefore they would ſtill pay much *leſs than half* of the duty on ſtills in the low country.

This, on				
14912	gallons, would produce a revenue of - - - - - - -	L.	44736	0 0
8833	in the low country diſtrict, at 3l. would, as before, produce -		26499	0 0
22403	rectifying ſtills in the low country, at 3l. *per* gallon, - - -		67209	0 0
46148	gallons would produce -	L.	138444	0 0

Carried over

Brought over	L. 138444	0	0
Former revenue on this - - - -	41547	13	5
So addition to the revenue - - -	L. 96896	6	7

Since the year 1790, the trade of diſtilling whiſky *is greatly increaſed*, the ſtills entered in the low country are much more in the contents than they were in 1790: *It is a melancholy truth, that the practice and habit of drinking ſpirits is gaining ground every day among the lower ranks.*

If the ſcheme here propoſed, by the addition to the duty, could check the *progreſs of this calamity*, it would not be the worſt feature in its countenance; but, in fact, the addition to the duty will have very little effect on the price; the matter is *ſo well underſtood*, and ſtills can be charged with *ſuch rapidity*, that it is believed the addition here propoſed would not add above 6d. *per* gallon to the price.

If by this plan the Highland diſtrict loſes ſome part of its preſent advantages, let it be recollected that it is they who pay the coal-duty, and that in the *communication propoſed, they will find the greateſt benefit.*

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